**What experiences do non-Swedish colleagues have of Equal Opportunities at SLU?**NJ-faculty Seminar 24th of October 2018

**Bullet points - main suggestions to improve current situation:**

\* Each department should make sure before arrival that a foreign employee has read & understand the information to be found on ”My employment” (SLU homepages)

\* Each department should have prepared contract and working place to be ready at first working day

\* To achieve this, it is important that each department has a responsible to help new foreign employees through bureaucracy

\* Additionally, SLU should have a central support for international HR questions which actively interact with the departments’ responsibles and maybe even with individuals. The NJ-faculties heads of department also requested some steering regarding the international questions from central SLU.

\* Help with housing is appreciated

\* SLU Swedish courses are appreciated

See seminar here: <http://tcs.video.slu.se/tcs/?id=d169e854-34e4-4b88-bec6-41eb259efe50>

The aim of this seminar was to share experiences and learn from our fellow colleagues from other countries how we can integrate equality aspects into our everyday conduct for a sustainable and stimulating working environment. How can we become better at attracting and receiving non-Swedish colleagues?

1. PhD student from Sri Lanka - Hasitha Priyashantha (Dept. of Molecular Sciences) –
2. PhD student from The Netherlands - Sophia Renes (Dept. of Aquatic Sciences and Assessment)
3. Post docs from Brazil and France – [Marcos Lana] & Pierre Chopin (Dept. of Crop Production Ecology)
4. PhD students from Iran & USA - Reza Hosseinpour Ashenaabad & Katrin Rychel (Dept. of Soil & Environment)
5. PhD student from India - Saurav Kalita (Dept. of Energy and Technology)
6. Group discussions – understanding each other & improving our work environment

**In short:**

* Presentations of PhD students & postdocs of several departments at the NJ-faculty
* Presentations have been prepared by discussions within each department to communicate the departments view
* Group discussions at seminar day summarizing experiences of the seminar participants
* We encouraged all staff at NJ-faculty to come in with comments via email

**Most important suggestions for improvement (summary):**

* Help the employee to be already before arriving to Sweden (by email) on
  + where to find **information on Life in Sweden** & **SLU (employment & SLU structure)**  
    [**https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/?menu=open**](https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/?menu=open) **Eva Borgert**, HR-specialist, contact at SLU for international issues

E-mail: eva.borgert@slu.se

Tel: 018-67 19 63

* + help with **housing**
  + help with **visa**
  + **ready contract on first day of arrival, plus ready working place** including computer, keys, email, email lists etc.
* First day(s)
  + Help with payment during the first time at SLU (international payment, department ICA card)
  + **Introduction round** at least to the most important persons of the department
  + Help to find the **SLU** **introduction days** to learn more about SLU (structure & campus)
* During employment
  + renewal of **visa/permit** for non-EU citizens only possible when **contracts** are in time
  + Enable **SLU Swedish courses** (SFI courses are not adapted to SLU employee’s needs)
  + **Social contacts & introduction into Swedish culture** are appreciated and valuable
  + Essential communication needs to be provided in English & Swedish. English information is often only rudimentary which disengages people.
* **In general:** a department mentor/permanent staff and a central help withbureaucracy at SLU should be a routine at each department to help foreign employees, following (updated) routines/checklists and helping with upcoming issues as listed above.

**Detailed suggestions for improvement coming up during discussions:**

1. Before start in Sweden:

* Most comments requested a “booklet” about the most important facts to know when arriving in Sweden & SLU. Most people were not aware of the SLU homepage “My employment”, where most of the requested information is given already.
  1. **We need to make sure to encourage/force the employees to be to read those pages carefully BEFORE arrival, and make sure that any questions are taken care of to make the start in Sweden as smooth as possible.  
     Help the employee already before starting in Sweden** where to find the most important information on SLU & Sweden:  
     <https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/?menu=open>  
     Including
     1. info about employment  
        <https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/new-at-slu/>
     2. the most important information about Sweden  
        <https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/living-and-working-in-sweden/>
* **Very different experiences at different departments – we need to make sure that an SLU employee gets the same service and start irrespective department!**A good example were the Department of Molecular Sciences & Department of Agricultural Research for Northern Sweden - **suggestion to learn from their routines\***Bad examples included waiting for the contract for months (with no payment, personal number, unsure insurance situation, problems with visa or visa renewal) or no preparation for arrival (working place not ready)
* Help new foreign employees to understand the **Swedish tax system** to avoid paying more taxes than necessary, because even small amounts of money at the start in Sweden can help a lot in everyday life
  + Pay correct taxes from start (A-skatt)
  + Inform on possibility to apply for subsidy on taxes due to specific skills and expertise within 3 months from start of contract, more information:

<https://www.forskarskattenamnden.se/andrasprak/taxationofresearchworkersboard.4.14dfc9b0163796ee3e7743d9.html>

1. **Housing** situation in Uppsala is very stressful. Other universities (and the campus in Umeå) have guest housing where a foreign employee can life at least the first time in Sweden. Help is needed!
2. **Visa** situation, and the renewal of visa is also stressful for non-EU citizens, who need to renew their visa annually, and for this need a renewed contract as well. Some departments should prepare better for this, as problems here can actually lead to further problems for the employee, with no permit for the partner in question, and no possibility to travel abroad (for example for study visits or conferences)  
   Contact Eva Borgert at SLU for help!
3. At SLU:
   1. **SLU Swedish course**: Unclear if SLU (or separate departments) encourage or require that employees are learning Swedish. IF required, SLU should prepare with own courses, because SFI is not adapted to SLU employees needs.   
      A good example was the Department of Crop Production Ecology and the VH faculty organizing own courses - **suggestion to learn from them  
      Idea**: Free course, but you need to pay if you do not show up.
   2. **SLU introduction day/campus tour:** They are valuable, but people felt they could not find them (info says only “Introduction days are arranged at the campuses every year. See the university calendar.”) and they should be arranged more often than now to meet the need of the continuous arrival of new employees.  
      **Ideas**:   
      \* **Introduction days should be recorded** and link should be found under exactly that header under <https://internt.slu.se/en/my-employment/new-at-slu/> to enable a “tour” at any time.

**\*** Every **department** should have an updated **Sharepoint-page** with introduction to the department and SLU (and an appointed person for updates!)  
\* **UPSC (SLU & UmU)** has many foreign employees – we should check their routines to find other good ideas.  
\* **Future faculty at SLU** is a great idea, people requested more information about how to participate

**Good examples from other universities and countries:**

* German research facility, which I found extremely useful:   
  <https://welcome-services.desy.de/e56138/Booklet_eng.pdf>
* KTH relocation

<https://www.kth.se/en/om/work-at-kth/relocation/welcome-to-kth-relocation-1.517039>

* USA has university ID cards so people can at first working day show who their employer is, and their ID. Simplifies identification.

**\*Routines** of the Department of Agricultural Research for Northern Sweden

* När man börjar så får man en liten påse med karta över Umeå, SLU-broschyr och vårt eget inst-dokument, tillsammans med nycklar. Det sista beskriver mycket kortfattat hur vissa saker fungerar, listar arbetstider och helgdagar, samt vilka personer som har vilka uppdrag. Bifogar dokumentet.
* Den person som anställer kör arbetsplatsintroduktion. Om personen i fråga är forskare så får den (både anställd och gästforskare) ofta hålla ett seminarium och berätta vem de är och vad de gör.
* Någon följer med till IT för att kassera ut ett IDIS-konto och sedan till servicecenter för ett nyckelkort. Gästforskare får ett lånekort.
* Sedan går vi (eller egentligen är det mest jag just nu) igenom medarbetarwebben. Jag brukar visa vilka sidor som är viktiga (SLU och jag, miljöhandboken, mm doktorandportalen om det är en doktorand) och låta personen läsa in sig själv de första dagarna. Många av programmen som resebokning och primula berättar vi om, men det är ingen ide att gå igenom dem förrän personen verkligen har ett ärende. När det gäller resebyrån kollar vi att namnet stämmer överens med passet, annars måste det ändras hos resebyrån.
* Vårt arbetsskyddsombud går en brandrond och visar brandsläckare hjärtstartare, nödutgångar, etc. och ska personen vara i labb får den dessutom gå utbildning för det med vår labbansvariga.
* Ska personen jobba i ladugården får den omgående göra online-kursen i försöksdjursvetenskap, svensk eller engelsk.
* Om dator inte hunnit komma så lånar vi en dator från IT under väntetiden.
* Så fort som möjligt tar vi/får vi ett porträttfoto på nya personer (både anställda och gästforskare som stannar typ mer än 2 veckor) som vi använder till dörrskylt, IDIS och till anslagstavla över anställda (vi har 3 st, en på campus, en på fältstationen och 1 i ladugården). Det underlättar för personalen att se vilka folk är och vad de heter och det underlättar för säkerhetsvakterna som kommer på kvällen och ser att personen hör hemma i det rummet.
* Vår prefekt skriver i princip alla mail till institutionen på båda språken. Vi har våra institutionsmöten på engelska, men med agenda och minnesanteckningar på både svenska och engelska.
* Vi har en kalender på vår SharePoint där man kan se alla helgdagar (dvs om vi är lediga 4 timmar, heldag, 2 timmar och vilken typ av dag det är (julafton, valborgsmässoafton, etc.). Måste fyllas i manuellt, men det tar inte så lång tid.
* När det gäller doktorander så har vi numera ett uppstartsmöte med doktorand, huvudhandledare och studierektor (jag), där vi pratar om plagiering och förväntningar, samt går igenom rutiner (universitetsgemensamma och institutionsspecifika) och ämnesstudieplaner. Jag (i egenskap av studierektor) har medarbetarsamtal med alla doktorander och då tar vi upp saker som fungerar bra och mindre bra, kulturkrockar, handledning, etc.

Vi är en ganska liten enhet och det är lätt för oss att ha koll på dessa saker. Däremot blir det naturligtvis fel ibland, vi missar att beställa dator osv, men det går ofta att lösa enkelt.

Johanna Wallsten